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# Firefighter turns cop to chase thief

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**I**N HIS ALMOST 38-year career, Oakland Assistant Fire Chief Don Matthews has chased thousands of fires.

But yesterday morning he chased his first thief.

Alone in his chief's car, Matthews pursued a man who had just stolen an American flag from the pole in front of the fire department's headquarters, 1605 Martin Luther King Jr. Way.

Matthews works out of Station 1 which is located in the headquarters building. At about 7:15 a.m. an arson inspector reported that a man was hauling the station's 3-by-5-foot flag down the pole.

That raised not only Matthews' ire, but got his patriotic juices flowing as well.

"He took the American flag," Matthews said. "We're not going to let him get away with that. We have a little bit of patriotism going here."

Matthews got in his car and followed the burly suspect down Martin Luther King Jr. Way. He said he used the car's loudspeaker to try and convince the man to give the flag back. All he got in return was a stream of profanities and threats from the man, who was also carrying two pieces of pipe.

As Matthews followed the man, he relayed directions for fire dispatchers to give to police.

Near the intersection of 22nd Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Way the man started coming toward Matthew's car, swinging one of the pipes and causing Matthews to pull back and wait for police.

Officer Robert Supriano was the first to arrive. The man, now swinging both pieces of pipe, started toward him, demanding that the officer shoot him.

When Officer Manny Aquino arrived, Supriano was able to knock one of the pipes from the man's hand with his baton.

The man took off but was chased down a block away by the officers, who were able to subdue him. They also rescued the flag, which the man had man-

aged to hang on to. That flag was being kept as evidence so a replacement was hoisted outside Station 1 later yesterday.

Police arrested Scott Montor, identified as a transient, and booked him at the Oakland City Jail for investigation of assault on a police officer, felony resisting arrest, brandishing a weapon and theft.

He refused to tell police why

he allegedly took the flag.

Matthews said crime fighting was a new experience but vowed he would do the same thing again. He said even though the sentimental value far outweighs the \$30 the flag is worth "you feel responsible for your station property, especially the flag."

"For all I know the guy was going to burn it and I don't agree with that either."